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Chairman: Mr. MROZIEWICZ (Poland)

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The meeting was called to order at 10.20 a.m.

AGENDA ITEMS 47 TO 65 (continued)

GENERAL DEBATE ON ALL DISARMAMENT ITEMS

Mr. TRINH XUAN LANG (Viet Nam): At the outset, on behalf of the delegation of Viet Nam, permit me to join previous speakers in congratulating you, Sir, on your election to the chairmanship of this Committee. I believe that, under your guidance, the work of the Committee will come to a successful conclusion. I would also like to take this opportunity to extend my felicitations to the other members of the Bureau of the Committee.

It stands to reason that the twentieth century will go down in mankind's history as one of its most eventful periods. In this century, mankind has achieved far-reaching progress in all the social, economic and scientific and technological fields, whereas it has failed to prevent the outbreak of two devastating world wars and has brought upon itself an unprecedented threat - an annihilating nuclear war. And now, at the turn of the century, the world is undergoing extensive and profound changes.

(Mr. Trinh Xuan Lang, Viet Nam)

Many of the new changes offer bright prospects for a much better world. With the end of the cold war, confrontation is giving way to cooperation in inter-State relations. Throughout the world the peaceful settlement of conflicts is developing into a dominant trend. Development is replacing the arms race as the primary priority and the foremost consideration in both the foreign and the domestic policies of most nations.

None the less, the world is still entangled in many of its old problems and faced with new, formidable challenges. As nuclear weapons still exist, mankind's survival remains in jeopardy. The termination of the bipolar world and the powerful and devastating display of military technology in the Gulf War may give rise to attempts to achieve hegemony, resort to the use of force and the acquisition of modern armaments and military technology. While not all of the old conflicts have been resolved, new conflicts have emerged or threatened to break out as a result of ethnic strife. In addition, the world economy and international economic relations are far from being a stable basis for peace and security as the developing countries continue to be kept in a disadvantageous position and the gap between the developed and developing countries continues to widen.

If mankind is to solve its outstanding problems, face its challenges and seize the opportunity for development, the cessation of the arms race and disarmament are a sine qua non. The cessation of the arms race and disarmament will eliminate the material basis of all wars, including nuclear war, promote confidence between nations and release huge resources for development endeavours.

It is gratifying to note that over the past several years, tangible and important progress has been recorded in the field of disarmament. Following

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the historic 1987 Treaty between the United States and the Soviet Union on the Elimination of Their Intermediate-Range and Shorter-Range Missiles - the INF Treaty - and the 1990 Agreement on Conventional Forces in Europe, in July 1991 the United States and the Soviet Union signed the Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty, which would actually reduce United States and Soviet strategic nuclear arsenals. With the decisions of France and China to accede to the 1968 Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT), for the first time since the signing of that Treaty all the nuclear-weapon States have become party to it, thereby greatly strengthening the nuclear non-proliferation regime. And most recently, at the initiative of President George Bush of the United States, which was then reciprocated by President Mikhail Gorbachev of the Soviet Union, the possibility of the elimination of tactical nuclear weapons and the cancellation of some of the military nuclear programmes of the two countries has emerged. Viet Nam welcomes those events, as well as the positive response from the other nuclear-weapon States. We believe that all the aforementioned developments have contributed to reducing the threat of nuclear war and brought closer the day when the world will be completely free from nuclear weapons.

Nevertheless, the tasks that lie before us are still enormous. Among them, the prevention of nuclear war and nuclear disarmament should continue to be issues of the highest priority. It goes without saying that the responsibility for the prevention of nuclear war and nuclear disarmament rests in the first instance upon the nuclear-weapon States. But since nuclear weapons pose the threat of extinction to "haves" and "have-nots" alike, all States have a vital interest in the process, and they therefore have the right and the responsibility to promote it. For that reason, and in view of the

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rapid changes that we have all witnessed recently, it is regrettable that the items related to the prevention of nuclear war, the cessation of the nuclear-arms race and nuclear disarmament on the agenda of the world's two largest negotiating and deliberative forums, namely, the Conference on Disarmament and the Disarmament Commission respectively, still fail to register any progress because of the positions of some nuclear-weapon States.

Viet Nam holds that in the nuclear field the long-standing question of the comprehensive prohibition of nuclear tests should be accorded the highest attention by the international community. We also hold that in the present international context the questions of the non-use, or at least non-first-use, of nuclear weapons and security assurances for non-nuclear States have become practicalities and deserve serious consideration. For the same reason, the raison d'être of the doctrine of "nuclear deterrence" is all the more questionable. Viet Nam supports efforts aimed at nuclear-free regions on the basis of the agreement of all countries in the regions. In this connection we would like once again to express the desire and aspiration of the Vietnamese people, along with the other peoples in South-East Asia, to turn that part of the world into a nuclear-weapon-free zone.

Over the past year, the international community has exerted strenuous efforts with a view to the signing of a comprehensive convention banning chemical weapons. Although not yet a member of the Conference on Disarmament, Viet Nam has been trying to contribute to the work of the Conference on this issue. The active efforts of the the Soviet Union and the United States have been essential in maintaining the momentum. We hope that solutions to the remaining issues will soon be found in a manner that conforms to the

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legitimate interests of all States. As a South-East Asian country, Viet Nam wishes to reaffirm its support for Australia's efforts to prevent the proliferation of chemical weapons in South-East Asia and the Pacific.

Recently, conventional disarmament and the reduction of military budgets have attracted greater attention from the international community. Viet Nam supports plans designed to curb the arms race in various regions of the world, provided that they are non-discriminatory and have the agreement of the countries of the region. Today, I am pleased to inform the Committee that Viet Nam has reduced its standing armed forces by 600,000 over the past two years. In the socio-economic policy of Viet Nam in the years to come, substantial troop-reduction and military-spending cuts are envisaged.

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It is true that developing countries should be actively engaged in conventional disarmament and should reduce their military expenditures, which place a heavy burden on their economies. Over the past 45 years almost all the wars and armed conflicts have taken place in developing countries. But it is also true that the main responsibility for conventional disarmament and reduction of global military spending lies with the military Powers and the developed countries because they are the principal arms suppliers and the major military spenders. Many of the wars and armed conflicts that have taken place in developing countries were imposed upon them directly or indirectly with arms supplies from big Powers or were the consequences of the policies of big Powers in their quest for spheres of influence.

For more than four decades, since the end of the Second World War, although disarmament and arms control have served as significant instruments in the international community's endeavours to halt and reverse the arms race and to safeguard world peace, they have had numerous limitations. They have, inter alia, failed to check the growth of the number of weapons, and have been confined to outmoded types of weapons; and in certain cases they have led to the assumption that they were discriminatory and were being pursued for the purpose of maintaining some kind of monopoly.

This situation has to be redressed if disarmament and arms control are to play the desired role in shaping a better world. In 1978, against the background of détente and some important progress in the field of disarmament, the first special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament was convened, and it succeeded in adopting by consensus a Final Document which set out not only the priorities and the specific measures of disarmament to be

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implemented in the following years, but also the principles guiding the process. That special session was a landmark in the disarmament process, for it was the first time that the world's nations were able jointly to draw up a disarmament strategy. The renewed arms race and the impasse in disarmament negotiations of the late 1970s and the better part of the 1980s should not be construed as evidence of a fallacy in the strategy of the first special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament; rather they are a violation of that strategy.

We are convinced that the strategy of the first special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament remains immensely valid and needs to be implemented in the years to come. Just as we should respect the pivotal principles agreed at the special session, we should also take into full consideration the new realities.

One of the salient features of today's world is the comprehensive nature of security. Hence, the lack of economic security experienced by most developing countries as a result of the unjust international economic order, or by some developing countries as victims of trade embargoes or economic blockades, naturally hinders the participation of those countries in the disarmament process at both the global and the regional levels. In this connection, I would like to underline the need to realize the intimate relationship between disarmament and development as asserted and defined at the 1987 International Conference on the Relationship between Disarmament and Development.

With the passage of time, the importance of confidence-building in all its aspects has been more clearly perceived. Confidence-building and disarmament are closely intertwined. In this regard, the guidelines for

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appropriate types of confidence-building measures and for the implementation of such measures on a global or regional level, endorsed in General Assembly resolution 43/78 H, are all the more relevant.

The fast pace and the power of the ongoing scientific and technological revolution offer every nation the possiblity of rapid advancement to the ranks of the world's developed nations. At the same time, they confront all nations with the danger of being quickly left behind and even of being permanently placed at the margin of the stream of development. This axiom makes crystal clear to Viet Nam the pressing and vital need for all-out efforts aimed at development.

Since the mid-1980s, Viet Nam has carried out a multifaceted policy of renewal, and we have obtained some initial encouraging results. However, we have not yet been able to overcome the socio-economic crisis. The success of our policy of renewal and of our development efforts cannot be secured without the creation of a favourable international environment, which accordingly is a long-term goal - the highest goal - of our foreign policy. On many occasions, Viet Nam has declared its willingness to establish friendship with all countries in the international community and its determination to work for peace, national independence and development.

In recent years Viet Nam has consolidated the relations of friendship and cooperation it has enjoyed with many countries; promoted its relations with countries in South-East Asia and with many other countries in Asia and the Pacific and in Western and Northern Europe; improved its relations with the People's Republic of China on the basis of the five principles of peaceful coexistence and without detriment to the interests of any third country; and is striving for the normalization of its relations with the United States.

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The new developments in South-East Asia, particularly the prospect of an early settlement of the Cambodian question, open up before the South-East Asian countries a new era of peace, cooperation and development. Viet Nam is prepared, together with other South-East Asian countries, to build a new future for South-East Asia. Most recently, on 16 September 1991, the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Viet Nam sent to the Chairman of the Standing Committee and the Foreign Ministers of the Association of South-East Asian Nations an official request to join the 1976 Bali Treaty of that Association.

As a new century is approaching, and in the context of the newly emerged world situation, all nations rightly hope for a future world of peace, equality and development for all. They also rightly ponder the remaining obstacles and new challenges. To realize this hope and to tackle these obstacles and challenges requires cooperation among, and efforts by, all nations. For its part, Viet Nam pledges to make its contribution.

Mr. KLESTIL (Austria): Permit me at the outset, Sir, to convey to you the most sincere congratulations of the Austrian delegation on your election as Chairman of the First Committee at the forty-sixth session of the General Assembly. Your election is not only a tribute to your personal experience and skill in disarmament matters, but also a compliment to your country, Poland.

I should also like to congratulate the Vice-Chairmen of the Committee, Ambassador Ordonez of the Philippines and Mr. Alpman of Turkey, as well as the Rapporteur, Mr. Sader of Uruguay.

I assure the officers of the Committee of the full support and cooperation of the Austrian delegation.

Let me also pay a most sincere tribute to the Under-Secretary-General for Disarmament Affairs, my good old friend, Yasushi Akashi, for the untiring efforts he and his colleagues of the Department for Disarmament Affairs are constantly making to promote the process of disarmament and to enhance the role of the United Nations in that field.

The aborted coup in Moscow challenged the frequently invoked democratic transformation of a formerly totalitarian system to prove its maturity. While leaders of Governments in all parts of the world were still wondering whether to write off a hope which had increasingly, for years, captivated international debate, the world once again witnessed a confrontation we had become all too familiar with: a regime relying for its security on weapons and tanks opposing a people seeking its democratic emancipation from authoritarian rule. Anxiously, we all watched as history this time did not repeat itself, but as an anachronistic period was overcome by the victory of ideas whose time has finally arrived. Thus an imminent threat to democratic advance was transformed into a catalyst for continuous peaceful change.

(Mr. Klestil, Austria)

The unprecedented change which has become well established, and which is reflected in a new spirit of cooperation within the United Nations, provides the international community of States with previously unforeseen chances. Thus, only a few weeks ago, the Austrian Federal Minister for Foreign Affairs could say in his statement to the General Assembly:

> "The breakdown of totalitarian ideologies offers vast opportunities for shaping a new universal consensus on international cooperation and peace." (A/46/PV.12, p. 37)

Cooperation has become a political, economic and military option as well as a necessity. It has proved effective - and not only in the framework of the Security Council. Consequently, the end of the East-West conflict, with its global implications, requires a reassessment of security assumptions some of which are still rooted in the period of the cold war. Finally, the decades of sporadic summit meetings have been succeeded by sustained openness, which allows for greater transparency and consequently enhances mutual confidence.

The quality of relations between the leading nations, and especially between the super-Powers, is profoundly reflected by the global network of multilateral diplomacy, as epitomized by the United Nations. Numerous statements in the general debate referred to the new challenges the United Nations confronts in the face of a substantially altered international framework. Thus recent progress in bilateral efforts to reduce the stockpile of weapons will have to be complemented by multilateral agreements. Whereas several important agreements on arms control and on disarmament with mainly regional impact have recently been concluded between the countries concerned, treaties that require universal adherence should be negotiated under United Nations auspices.

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One of the important lessons drawn from the developments that have reshaped international relations during recent years is that historic opportunities and challenges have to be met boldly. Flexibility is required to react to situations considered unthinkable only shortly before they occurred. Equally, political vision is necessary to transform historic opportunities into lasting improved conditions. The task we are presently facing is to secure smooth evolutionary transitions within an institutional framework that allows for dynamic development supported by stable structures.

Today we are facing a radically diminished level of global military threat. On the European continent possibilities and probabilities of surprise attacks have been radically diminished, and several measures to enhance security have been adopted. Hence we are challenged to match the significantly reduced global threat by developing a new stability within the universal security system. This will have to be done by a balanced and significant reduction of existing armouries.

In his report on the work of the Organization, Secretary-General Perez de Cuellar deplored the

> "deleterious ... obsession with military security, which has corroded international relations and hampered the advance of most developing countries towards stable democratic institutions." (A/46/1, p. 11)

My country has always pursued a policy of active security in which military security is but one aspect of a complementary system. Austria recognizes the legitimate right of self-defence as well as the necessity of undertaking adequate measures to secure defence capacities. By the same token, we believe that we are helped by a historic opportunity to overcome the fallacy of equating a build-up in armaments with increased security. To establish a

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global system of cooperative structures which will secure lasting stability and sustainable peace we have to focus on a few key priority issues.

First, the most urgent and immediate objective is the non-proliferation of nuclear weapons. The 1968 Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons has effectively prevented the spread of nuclear weapons, and thus the Treaty has significantly contributed to international peace and stability. Enforced by the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) and its safeguards system, it is also charged with ensuring that nuclear materials and equipment for peaceful purposes are not diverted to military use.

Experience drawn from the Gulf War now suggests a need to strengthen the IAEA nuclear safeguards system. Special inspections of any site, even if it has not been placed under Agency safeguards as a declared peaceful nuclear installation, are already provided for. Such spot checks by Agency inspectors have never been implemented in the past. They should be used solely in cases of great concern. The suggested institution of a register of exports of nuclear equipment and technology, for the purpose of monitoring the flow of potentially dangerous technology around the world, merits serious consideration. Measures of verification should be improved to secure reliable detection of non-compliance wherever and whenever it might occur.

(Mr. Klestil, Austria)

Since France and China have recently announced their intention to accede to the non-proliferation Treaty we hope that all five declared nuclear-weapon States will soon be parties to the Treaty. Regrettably, a number of countries, among them a few with considerable peaceful nuclear programmes and facilities, have not yet decided to become States parties. Some of them seem to consider the distinction, inherent in the non-proliferation Treaty, to be discriminatory between nuclear-weapon States, the so-called haves, and States without nuclear facilities, the have-nots. Some of them also criticize the lack of significant progress towards nuclear disarmament, which is referred to in article VI of the Treaty.

The Fourth Review Conference, which could not agree on a final document, undertook a comprehensive review of the non-proliferation Treaty. Obvious consensus on a wide range of issues addressed by the Review Conference might still strengthen the non-proliferation Treaty in the future. Thus, we do believe that in 1995 a consensus can be reached on an indefinite, unconditional extension of the Treaty.

The second issue Austria considers to be of utmost importance is to stop the qualitative nuclear arms race. We have to halt the development of new, more sophisticated and more destructive systems of nuclear weapons. In a public appeal to the Soviet Union and the United States in 1987 Austria called for an immediate end to all nuclear testing as the only way to prevent the further development of nuclear weapons. Progress, achieved in a bilateral context, has led to the ratification of the threshold test-ban Treaty of 1974 and the Treaty on Underground Nuclear Explosions for Peaceful Purposes of 1976. While they adopt quantitative and qualitative thresholds for allowed

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testing, the conclusion of a comprehensive nuclear test-ban treaty is nevertheless required as the most effective means of stopping all nuclear testing.

When the partial test-ban Treaty was adopted in 1963 the conclusion of a comprehensive test-ban treaty was prevented only by questions relating to technical verification. Politically, it was then regarded as acceptable by all sides. Since then substantial progress has been made regarding the feasibility of a global seismological control network to verify any major underground tremors. Such a control regime would constitute the adequate cornerstone of the verification regime of a comprehensive test-ban treaty. But in the meantime, newly emerged political considerations have blocked multilateral negotiations to achieve agreement on a comprehensive test ban.

Unfortunately, the Amendment Conference of the States Parties to the partial test-ban Treaty, convened last January, could not agree on a consensus document. A final text introduced by the Chairman of the Conference did not find consensus. It contained major elements of an informal continuation of the Conference on the basis of informal consultations as well as a reference to necessary deliberations on questions still to be solved in the context of ongoing efforts in the framework of the Conference on Disarmament. Finally, a vote took place on a text that not only suggested further informal consultations but also envisaged a formal continuation of the process. This, unfortunately, seems difficult because of the existing political stalemate on the issue. Nevertheless, in our understanding, the partial test-ban Treaty Amendment Conference did prove successful as a catalytic input for future efforts, which will, it is hoped, achieve a comprehensive test-ban Treaty as soon as possible.

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Thirdly, I should like to refer to the objective of real reductions in nuclear weapons. On this issue remarkable progress has been made recently. The implementation of the Treaty on the Elimination of Intermediate-Range and Shorter-Range Missiles (INF Treaty), in accordance with the agreed timetable, will, for the first time, eliminate an entire class of nuclear weapons. The long-expected Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty (START) was signed on 31 July. We welcome the Treaty, which foresees a significant reduction within seven years of strategic nuclear weapons with a range of more than 5,000 kilometres. The verification regime, including data exchanges, on-site inspections, short-notice inspections at facilities related to strategic offensive arms, and challenge inspections of suspect sites, should provide for swift implementation of the Treaty.

A substantive reduction of conventional armaments in Europe has rendered obsolete defence concepts based on the early use of nuclear forces. The end of the flexible-response doctrine has facilitated the recent announcement by President Bush unilaterally to withdraw all land-based and sea-based tactical-nuclear-weapon systems from Europe. In a reciprocal initiative President Gorbachev proposed even deeper cuts in the tactical nuclear arsenal, suggesting also the elimination of nuclear anti-aircraft missiles as well as the reciprocal elimination of air-based tactical nuclear weapons. Austria welcomes this positive escalation of unilateral disarmament measures. We have to keep in mind though that unilateral disarmament initiatives, as welcome as they are, will not be covered by any verification regime. Therefore we hope that the reciprocal announcements will initiate a sustainable nuclear disarmament process within the multilateral disarmament machinery.

(Mr. Klestil, Austria)

As nuclear weapons have a global dimension all countries bear a common and legitimate interest in their actual and future fate. The role of the United Nations in this multilateral process of nuclear-arms reduction should be a catalytic one. Its approach will have to be twofold. With its universal membership it responds, on the one hand, to undertakings of a global dimension. On the other hand, its three regional disarmament centres could become pivotal in strengthening the regionalization of disarmament efforts.

The fourth issue of importance for Austria deals with the final elimination of all weapons of mass destruction. Negotiations on the convention on the production, stockpiling and destruction of chemical weapons have entered the final stage. We welcome the fact that, with 1992, finally a time-limit has been set. Austria attributes the greatest importance to the future convention. Even as a non-member State of the Conference on Disarmament we have been participating in the work of its subsidiary bodies. We welcome recent initiatives which encourage progress and which could contribute to the timely conclusion of the convention. Particularly valuable is the unconditional renunciation of any use of chemical weapons and the commitment completely to destroy all stockpiles of chemical weapons and production facilities upon the entry into force of the chemical weapons convention. It will speed up the global abolition of this weapon category.

Some key issues still remain to be resolved. Questions of verification and of compliance with the provisions of the future convention, including the verification regime to be established for the civilian chemical industry, still require further consideration. Unresolved are, furthermore, the issue of challenge inspections as well as the question of size, composition and the

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decision-making process of the executive council which is to be established to facilitate the implementation of the Convention. Austria is prepared to contribute towards an early conclusion of the chemical weapons convention, which will have to attract universal adherence.

I should like to recall that the Austrian Federal Minister of Foreign Affairs has, in his statement before the Conference on Disarmament, officially submitted a detailed offer to host in Vienna the future organization for the prohibition of chemical weapons. The offer was reiterated by the Austrian Foreign Minister in his statement of the General Assembly at the current session.

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The Third Review Conference of the 1972 Convention on the Prohibition of the Development, Production and Stockpiling of Bacteriological (Biological) and Toxin Weapons and on Their Destruction met in Geneva last month. The Conference could not agree on a proposed intersessional mechanism, but progress achieved on the agenda items relating to confidence-building measures and verification, will strengthen the Convention. The set of confidence-building measures adopted in the final declaration of the Second Review Conference, was improved and extended by three additional measures. The biological warfare Convention does not include any verification procedures. Hence, the decision to convene an ad-hoc group of government experts from 30 March to 10 April 1992 to examine possible verification measures, is regarded as a first step towards a possible follow-up. Austria attributes great importance to the issues of biological weapons and will continue to work towards further strengthening of the Convention.

The reduction of weapons of mass destruction is closely interrelated with the fifth objective I wish to address - the issue of conventional weapons. While the control of vertical and horizontal proliferation of nuclear weapons has been provided for and the reduction of nuclear warheads initiated, conventional weapons have continued to do the actual killings in horrifying numbers, as is well known. Accounting for a huge share of the global military expenditure, they will be of increasing interest in the intensifying debate on scarce resource allocation in the context of agenda item 60 (e), Disarmament and Development.

(Mr. Klestil, Austria)

Substantial advances in weapons sophistication as well as in improved logistics for their deployment have increased the global significance of conventional weapons. Recent battlefield experiences have displayed their enormous destruction capabilities.

Strategic, political and economic considerations require that augmented attention be payed to all aspects of conventional weapons by multilateral disarmament negotiations. Austria welcomes the European Community's initiative to promote a United Nations based arms transfer register, which could serve as an important confidence-building measure. The register, by enhancing transparency, might foster voluntary constraint by suppliers and recipients alike. Provided it will be non-discriminatory in character and universally recognized, it could effectively impede the entry of excess capacities of conventional arms into the international arms trade.

The Conventional Forces in Europe Treaty, negotiated within the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe (CSCE), in Vienna, is an effective response to the new international climate in which cooperation replaces confrontation. Its speedy conclusion proved that dedication, translated into political decisions, can meet formidable challenges. Hence it took a mere 20 months to agree on the Treaty's far-reaching scope and on its technical complexity.

A sustainable disarmament process requires, as a precondition, a conducive political climate of improved confidence and security perceptions. The new set of confidence-building measures, elaborated in Vienna within the CSCE, and designed to complement the provisions of the 1986 Stockholm Document, will further enhance security in the region.

(Mr. Klestil, Austria)

Let me refer to the interregional seminar on Confidence and Security Building Measures, organized by the United Nations Department for Disarmament Affairs, so ably directed by Mr. Akashi, and hosted by Austria last February. The seminar, which was the first of its kind, addressed the question whether experience gained from the CSCE process is relevant for other regions of the world. The seminar also tried to assess the feasibility of a role for the United Nations in enhancing the further elaboration of confidence-building measures. In this process the United Nations should not substitute regional initiatives, but make an effort to complement them.

For the second time in two years, top military officers of all CSCE States are now meeting in Vienna to assess the impact of political change on military doctrines. The following trends, already defined by the first such seminar in 1990, have hence been accelerated: disappearance of the concepts of an ideological enemy and a hostile alliance; efforts to reshape military doctrines and armed forces structures to serve solely defensive purposes; elimination of offensive structures; drastic reductions of military power, military budgets and training activities of armed forces. Austria supports all efforts to complement these security advances with improved cooperative structures within the CSCE. The existing conflict-prevention centre should provide the institutional framework for a permanent dialogue on security policies in the region.

The favourable political climate, unilateral disarmament initiatives and progress in the multilateral arms negotiations, both at the regional and global levels, must be adequately reflected by the United Nations disarmament bodies.

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The 1991 substantive session of the Disarmament Commission, over which my country had the honour to preside, was met with the very active participation by a large number of delegations. The recent reform in the Disarmament Commission resulted in concentration on future-oriented items in a reduced agenda that facilitates in-depth consideration of four topics which are to be discussed for three consecutive years. My delegation will address the issue of the Disarmament Commission in a separate statement.

As the only negotiating body within the United Nations disarmament machinery, the Conference on Disarmament occupies a position of the utmost importance. Whereas the existing stalemate continues to block progress on a few of its ten permanent agenda items, positive developments within some of the subsidiary bodies of the Conference could advance the negotiations during 1991. My country has applied for membership in the Conference on Disarmament and is eagerly awaiting its expansion, which was decided upon as early as 1982. Even before admission as a full member, we will continue to participate in, and contribute to, its substantive work.

Every year the agenda of the First Committee comprises the entirety of disarmament issues. Ongoing efforts to streamline the agenda and to concentrate the workload has led to a continuous reduction of agenda items. We welcome this development. The 22 substantive items on this year's agenda, some of them divided into numerous sub-items, still present a formidable task which will require extraordinary efforts by all delegations. Austria hopes that the trend to strive for consensus on an increasing number of items will continue. It would be in harmony with the new spirit of cooperation.

(Mr. Klestil, Austria)

According to the 1990 comprehensive study on nuclear weapons, the arsenals of the five declared nuclear-weapon States contain 50,000 nuclear warheads. The study shows that qualitative improvements in nuclear-weapons systems continue, albeit in reduced intensity. Recent findings of the United Nations Scientific Committee illustrate that the nuclear non-proliferation regime is not yet completely secure. To complement this scenario, 80 per cent of the $2.5 billion, spent every day on armaments, pay for conventional weapons.

For decades, we have legitimized the continuing military build-up with global tensions and growing security needs. The time has come when dramatically reduced global threats justify significant reductions in all weapons categories, not only in nuclear and chemicals weapons, but also in the conventional armoury.

Mr. ZARIF (Islamic Republic of Iran): At the outset, I would like to congratulate you, Sir, on your unanimous election to the chairmanship of the First Committee. We are confident that, with your vast diplomatic skills and knowledge of international affairs, you will effectively guide the First Committee at this sensitive juncture. I would also like to express my delegation's sincere gratitude to your predecessor, Ambassador Rana of Nepal, who conducted the proceedings of the Committee at the forty-fifth session of the General Assembly in such an exemplary manner. Let me also take this opportunity to extend my felicitations to the members of the Bureau, and my appreciation to the Under-Secretaries-General and the Secretary of the Committee, Mr. Kheradi.

The end of the cold war, coupled with extraordinary developments in East-West relations and sweeping changes in the international arena, has confronted the international community with unprecedented challenges and opportunities. The compelling momentum generated in the wake of the halt of traditional bloc rivalries provides a new opportunity to shape the future world order based on justice, equality and genuine peace and security.

Indeed, a brief examination of the past four decades clearly indicates how the cold war was central in reinforcing the arms race and intensifying instability and militarization throughout the globe. This bitter experience underscores the point that a new security order for the world cannot be established on the basis of the ill-conceived policies and approaches of the past, such as nuclear deterrence, which proved futile in creating a viable peace and security. In this connection, the First Committee, as a multilateral body dealing with disarmament and international security issues, can play an important role in articulating the elements required to build a

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new security order consonant with the true expectations and aspirations of the international community in the new international era.

There is a widely held belief that disarmament and arms control agendas are now more manageable, given the propitious opportunities provided by positive developments ranging from the conclusion of the Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty and the progress made at the Conference on Disarmament towards the adoption of a comprehensive convention on the universal prohibition of chemical weapons, to the signing of the Charter of Paris. In fact, these developments can serve as tangible preludes to facilitate further progress in the areas of disarmament and global security.

Nevertheless, in order to find overall and comprehensive means to achieve these ends, several inextricably linked problematic issues must be duly addressed. These include regional and international conflicts as well as inclinations towards militarism, which are the direct outgrowths of disrespect for the rights of nations, violation of the sovereignty and territorial integrity of States, the hegemonic policies of certain Powers, and the ever-increasing gap between North and South.

In this regard, the Secretary-General, in his report on the work of the Organization, emphasizes that no system of collective security will remain viable unless it includes workable solutions to the problems of poverty and destitution which afflict the greater part of the world. For the new security order to be effectively forged and structured, it is imperative that the immense manpower and financial and economic resources which are becoming available following recent achievements in the area of arms control and disarmament, be allocated to bridging the widening gap between developed and developing countries.

(Mr. Zarif, Islamic Republic of Iran)

Because of the primacy of security concerns for all States, it is evident that any arms control initiative must be characterized by well-founded and balanced elements and must be devoid of political expediency. Efforts towards enhancing transparency, confidence-building measures, and developing a workable plan for arms control and strengthening the security process, at both the international and the regional level, must be synchronized with progress in other areas, some of which I highlighted earlier.

In this context, it is essential that programmes for regional arms control be based on a non-discriminatory approach and ensure the security of the countries of each region vis-à-vis threats emanating from within and outside their respective regions. It is regrettable, however, that most of the arms control initiatives advanced by certain big Powers for the Middle East in recent months have lacked clear insight. They have in fact been blurred by biased inclinations and ill-founded goals. Furthermore, they have failed to address the sources of tension and existing imbalances in the region. Therefore, not surprisingly, these initiatives have not provided a glimmer of hope. In fact, shifting from the central issues to peripheral ones through such superficial attention to the symptoms rather than the causes of tension cannot provide the necessary groundwork for durable peace and undiminished security in the region.

In spite of the recent changes in the relations between the major nuclear Powers, underestimating the threats still posed by the concentration of thousands of nuclear weapons in the nuclear arsenals of the great Powers would be a grave mistake. As has often been reiterated, special responsibility rests on these Powers to bring about the realization of the long-sought goal of the international community - nuclear disarmament. While we welcome any

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genuine initiative on the part of the major nuclear Powers and other nuclear-weapon States towards the reduction of nuclear arms, we cannot but stress that all nations have a vital interest in the negotiations on nuclear disarmament. Hence, it is imperative that every effort be directed at securing progress in multilateral forums, particularly in the Conference on Disarmament, which is the world's single most important forum for multilateral disarmament negotiations. To achieve this goal, the responsible and cooperative behaviour of nuclear-weapon States is indispensable.

The Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) continues to be the sole instrument for controlling and checking the nuclear-arms race. However, even though this Treaty has somewhat controlled the horizontal proliferation of nuclear arms, its failure to address the vertical growth of nuclear arms, together with the non-compliance of nuclear-weapon States parties to the Treaty with respect to their obligations - specifically those related to articles IV and VI - has triggered a sense of frustration and cynicism concerning the credibility and viability of the NPT. To minimize and remove the shortcomings of the Treaty, and to maximize its credibility, it is incumbent upon the nuclear-weapon States parties to the Treaty to fulfil their commitments under the Treaty. Undoubtedly, this would play a significant role in the extension of the Treaty beyond 1995.

In this context, we are firmly convinced that, as the most fundamental step towards the total elimination of nuclear weapons, all testing of nuclear arms must be stopped once and for all, and that all necessary measures for concluding a comprehensive nuclear-test-ban treaty must be taken as soon as possible. In fact, in our opinion, the argument advanced by some nuclear-weapon States that the cessation of nuclear-weapons tests cannot be

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verified is no longer valid, since the advancement of the technical efficiency of verification methods makes it possible to detect underground nuclear tests with a high degree of certainty. In any case, one cannot justify the refusal of certain nuclear Powers to bring nuclear-weapon tests to a halt and to accept an underground test ban as a vital measure to complete the partial test-ban Treaty.

Furthermore, pending the elimination of nuclear weapons, another essential effort is required to render a non-proliferation regime effective - the compliance of nuclear-weapon States with the numerous calls from the non-nuclear-weapon States to assure the security of these States against the use or threat of use of nuclear weapons through inclusive and legally binding international arrangements.

(Mr. Zarif, Islamic Republic of Iran)

Universal adherence to the Treaty is yet another significant prerequisite to consolidating the non-proliferation régime. It is with a sense of satisfaction that we note that the number of States parties to the Treaty continues to increase, and we particularly welcome the decisions in principle of France and China to accede to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT).

It is quite evident that the failure of the industrialized countries parties to the Treaty to facilitate the transfer of the equipment, materials, and scientific and technological information necessary for peaceful applications of nuclear energy by the developing countries represents another shortcoming of the Treaty. The severely restrictive policies applied against developing countries parties to the Treaty have prevented them from pursuing and implementing development plans that rely, in one way or another, on the peaceful use of nuclear energy. A salient feature of that discriminatory approach is the refusal of certain industrialized countries to fulfil their commitments to complete two nuclear power plants in my country in which we have already invested several billions of dollars. For countries that have faithfully observed their obligations, it is a matter of urgency that all existing barriers, motivated and established primarily on discriminatory and political grounds, be lifted immediately.

In the course of past years illuminating and convincing arguments have been advanced about the necessity for the establishment of zones free from nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction in various regions of the world, including the Middle East. Indeed, the nuclear-weapon capability of the Zionist regime, the widespread use of chemical weapons against my

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country, and the violation of the safeguards of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) by a non-nuclear-weapon State party to the NPT in our region, as illustrated by the IAEA reports, are all matters of great concern to us. These make it all the more imperative to spare no effort to establish a zone free from nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction in the Middle East. My country, which proposed to the General Assembly in 1974 the establishment of a nuclear-weapon-free zone in the Middle East, has never ceased its endeavors to achieve this valuable goal. We believe that all necessary steps in identifying the elements that would facilitate the establishment of such a zone must be taken into account. Furthermore, we are of the view that concurrent efforts for the enhancement of a similar approach in adjacent regions would help to pave the way for the establishment of this zone in the Middle East.

Naval disarmament continues to be a compelling priority on the disarmament agenda. Yet this subject has been conspicuously absent from the framework of arms-control and disarmament initiatives. The naval presence of the big Powers in or near the territorial waters of other States constitutes a serious threat to the security and sovereignty of those States. In the Persian Gulf region, the massive military presence of the United States creates significant tension and threats that cannot be overlooked. This, in turn, foreshadows a future fraught with uncertainty and offsets regional initiatives aimed at strengthening peace and security in this region. It is our deep conviction that ensuring the security of the Persian Gulf region and enhancement of confidence can be best achieved, first and foremost, through fostering multifaceted cooperation among the littoral States within a security

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and cooperation arrangement free from reliance on the military presence of foreign Powers.

At the same time, we must underscore the importance of an immediate consideration of the issue of naval disarmament in relevant international forums. The implementation of the provisions of the Declaration of the Indian Ocean as a Zone of Peace and the early convening of the conference in Colombo for that purpose, together with the achievement of the objectives of the Declaration, will all undoubtedly build confidence and consolidate the security of the littoral and hinterland States of the Indian Ocean.

The conclusion of the preparatory work by the Ad Hoc Committee on the Indian Ocean for the convening of the first stage of the conference in Colombo has provided a sound basis for working actively towards the implementation of the Declaration and the realization of its objectives.

Let me now turn to the chemical weapons convention which, as a security agreement, would contribute to the strengthening of international peace and security. This year, the on-going negotiations on the chemical weapons convention have been marked by remarkable success. Issues related to the prohibition of the use of chemical weapons are now incorporated clearly into article 1 of the draft convention. Some contentious and unacceptable positions, including those regarding the retention of 2 per cent of chemical-weapon stocks within 10 years of the entry into force of the draft convention as well as those regarding the right of retaliation with chemical weapons, have now been rectified. Although we hope that the convention would be finalized by 1992, we cannot sufficiently stress that there still remain several outstanding issues that demand meticulous work and constructive effort by the Conference on Disarmament.

(Mr. Zarif, Islamic Republic of Iran)

The issue of verification, which constitutes an extremely sensitive part of the convention, must be drafted so scrupulously as not only to ward off any possible violation of the convention, but also so as to curb undue interference in routine activities of civil chemical industries. Inspection on request would be the legitimate right of any State party to the convention; nevertheless, misuse of that right for the purpose of obtaining information is inconsistent with the provisions of the convention and is by no means acceptable. Thus, it is our considered view that a well-established mechanism must be devised to prevent any misuse of the right of verification.

Another significant issue is the assurance of the security of States parties vis-à-vis the use or threat of use of chemical weapons. The provisions of the draft convention with respect to this issue are of utmost importance; they must be well-defined and devoid of any ambiguity and should be characterized by strong enforcement mechanisms.

Furthermore, because the Executive Council would be one of the main organs of the Organization for the enforcement of the convention and in which all States parties should be represented on the basis of rotation and equitable criteria, there should be no permanent membership in the Council. Furthermore, the terms for membership in the Executive Council, as well as for its presidency, should be as limited as possible in order to provide opportunities for the participation of the greatest number of States parties.

Providing assistance for the peaceful use of chemical industries encompasses yet another highly sensitive area of the negotiations on a chemical weapons convention that is of great concern to all developing countries. It is our deep conviction that in return for the obligations and

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commitments to be undertaken by the States parties to the convention, the privileges and prerogatives of those States for development of civil chemical industries must be ensured. Lack of such a guarantee will have a negative impact on attaining universal acceptance of the convention. In addition, all the impediments being put forward by the Australian group vis-à-vis civil chemical trade must be abandoned once the convention enters into force. For the international community, and particularly for the vast majority of developing countries, such an application of a double standard in this regard is unjustifiable.

Moreover, no international agreement without sufficient and effective enforcement guarantees can realize its objectives. Thus, a sanctions mechanism must be incorporated into the convention to ensure its proper enforcement. In fact, such a mechanism would also serve as the enforcement apparatus of a future convention on chemical weapons.

(Mr. Zarif, Islamic Republic of Iran)

Provisions governing the costs of enforcing of the convention constitute the concluding sections of the draft convention. It is required that those costs be divided into two parts: those related to the destruction of chemical weapons and those covering the routine costs of enforcement of the convention. We believe that the former are the responsibility of countries which possess these types of weapons of mass destruction, either within their national territories or on territories under their control or jurisdiction. Other routine costs of the convention should be distributed among States parties on the basis of the United Nations scale of assessments.

Finally, it is imperative that, together with ongoing endeavours to conclude the convention on chemical weapons, all countries which have not yet acceded to the 1925 Geneva Protocol and to the biological and toxin weapons Convention do so forthwith and without any reservations. The recent Third Review Conference of the Parties to the Convention on on biological and toxin weapons indeed provided a welcome opportunity to embark upon serious work to measure the Convention against technological developments which have occurred in the past two decades, and to contemplate taking measures to rectify its shortcomings.

As the world moves beyond the cold-war era, the international community is compelled to reconsider old perceptions, doctrines and realities. It is now imperative that every effort be made to benefit from this situation and to forge ahead vigorously with a view to building a new structure of international relations based upon the Charter principles of peace, security, justice and equality.

Mr. SILOVIC (Yugoslavia): First of all, Sir, I would like to congratulate you on your election as Chairman of this important body. We are confident that under your guidance we shall have a comprehensive and thorough exchange of views leading to a fruitful outcome for our deliberations. I also wish to congratulate other members of the Bureau on their election.

May I pay a tribute to the late Ambassador, and Nobel Prize winner, Alfonso Garcia Robles, for his outstanding and remarkable contribution in the disarmament field and to the work of this Committee over the years.

The end of the cold war heralded a new era of international relations. The events that have taken place since the last session provide ample evidence of that. We are confronted with new challenges that require new and timely responses. In such significantly changed international circumstances for global stability, political agreements,the resolution of certain hot-beds of crisis, arms reduction and so forth are of particular importance.

But at same time, the new concept of international security now emerging cannot be realized if it does not include the complex of social and economic issues, human rights, environmental concerns and so forth. Durable and stable peace and global stability cannot be ensured without the development of developing countries and their integration into the world economy at a much faster pace.

It is an indisputable fact that in the recent past Europe has undergone the greatest of transformations. The strengthening and institutionalization of a specific and comprehensive system of relations inaugurated by the process of the Conference on Security and Co-operation in Europe (CSCE) provide the groundwork for further development of relations in Europe based on the Charter of Paris for a New Europe.

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Instead of confrontation, threats, deterrents, disputes and misunderstandings we hear more and more about cooperation, integration, assistance, respect for human rights, democratization, freedoms, entrepreneurship and other, newer, concepts. Nevertheless, these far-reaching positive trends are at the same time accompanied by many uncertainties and other negative side-effects. We therefore feel that what was said in the Declaration issued at the ministerial Conference of non-aligned countries, held in Ghana just few weeks ago, "that the world is still not a safe place", is absolutely true.

It is indeed a paradox that at the beginning of a new era holding out many promises, various problems that we thought belonged to the past have begun to re-surface unexpectedly, such as the revival of nationalism, ethnic conflicts and other extremism. Unfortunately, my country represents a grim example in that respect, but I think that enough has been said about Yugoslavia by my Foreign Minister in the general debate and at the Security Council meeting on the situation in my country, as well by my delegation in the Third Committee, so I am not going to dwell on it here now.

As a new system of international security is created, the role of the United Nations gains more and more importance. The Declaration issued at the ministerial Conference in Accra says that the United Nations constitutes the central forum for the treatment of critical problems that affect humanity.

It is our profound belief that the United Nations, in acquiring that role, should establish stronger links among various regional and subregional groupings and security and cooperation systems. The efficiency and viability

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of the United Nations which came to the fore after the end of the cold war should be extended to other fields of its activities as well, including disarmament.

Never in the past have we heard more about arms and disarmament than in the period between this and last year's session. On the one hand, the war in the Gulf testified to the terrifying and destructive nature of modern weapons and the consequences they might have from, inter alia, the human, economic and ecological points of view.

On the other hand, disarmament processes have been remarkably enhanced. Here, we have in mind, first, the latest initiatives for the reduction of nuclear arsenals. In addition to signing the Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty (START), the United States and the Soviet Union have both put forward new proposals for further and substantive reduction of those arms. Yugoslavia upholds and supports these proposals.

Secondly, we welcome the decision of several States to accede to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons, as well as the announced intention of France and China to do so. We are of the opinion that this will contribute to the further strengthening of the universal system of non-proliferation, which should be one of the pillars of the new system of international security.

Thirdly, we must not lose sight of the breakthroughs in negotiations for the conclusion of the comprehensive convention on the prohibition of chemical weapons at the Conference on Disarmament in Geneva. Yugoslavia, as a member of that single multilateral disarmament negotiating forum, feels that additional efforts should be invested and activities focused in order to

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provide conditions for the finalization of the text of that convention and for opening the convention to the signatory procedure as a matter of priority.

In the same vein, we would like to point to the successful outcome of the Third Review Conference of the Parties to the Convention prohibiting biological weapons, held in Geneva early in September.

The process of conventional disarmament has gained momentum with the signing of the agreement establishing a balance of conventional forces in Europe at lower levels.

The finalization of the study on ways and means of promoting transparency in international transfers of conventional arms represents a significant contribution to the promotion of the process of conventional disarmament. We believe that enhancement of transparency in this field is of extreme importance, as the Secretary-General stated in the foreword to the study:

> "transparency can contribute to the building of confidence and security, the reduction of suspicions, mistrust and fear, and the timely identification of trends in arms transfers". (A/46/301, annex, p. 3)

(Mr. Silovic, Yugoslavia)

Furthermore, one of the concrete ideas recommended in the study is the creation of a universal and non-discriminatory register, under United Nations auspices, of arms transfers. Yugoslavia supports this recommendation and considers it to be useful.

Proposals for setting up such a register have been put forward by the European Community and Japan. Non-aligned and developing countries also have their own proposals in that regard, and all of them should be taken into account. We believe that the realization of such an important initiative should be a common endeavour and joint action of the international community. In that respect, my delegation will make efforts to ensure that common positions and decisions are reached.

Within the framework of attaining the goal we have set - general and complete disarmament - nuclear disarmament remains the highest priority. In that context, one of the questions that certainly calls for new endeavours is a comprehensive nuclear-test ban.

In this regard, we welcome the recent decision of the Soviet Union, announced by President Gorbachev, to have a unilateral moratorium on nuclear tests through the next 12 months.

We also believe that, following the breakthroughs in bilateral nuclear disarmament, it is high time the appropriate conditions were finally created for the Geneva Conference on Disarmament's Ad Hoc Committee on a Nuclear Test Ban to be given a negotiating mandate.

I should particularly like to stress the importance of the Amendment Conference of the Parties to the partial test-ban Treaty, held in New York last January. The Conference mandated its President to conduct consultations

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with a view to achieving progress and resuming the work of the Conference at an appropriate time. In that respect, we support all the activities pursued by the President of the Conference, the Foreign Minister of Indonesia, Mr. Ali Alatas, with a view to reconvening the Conference. In our opinion, it is particularly important to preserve the present momentum and intensify efforts to ensure the early conclusion of a comprehensive nuclear-test ban.

In closing I should like to make a few remarks about the rationalization of the work of the First Committee.

The changed international circumstances, the emergence of a new system of international security and the new priorities and challenges that lie ahead point to the necessity to sustain deliberations on the efficiency of the United Nations and on its revitalization. We believe that this activity should be further pursued. It should be well-considered, carefully structured and intensified so that it may extend to all activities of the General Assembly. Also, it is evident that some agenda items do not correspond with the significantly changed international environment. In that framework, we consider that the work of the First Committee is gaining importance, and we feel that this is the right time to discuss this question, with an open mind and in a spirit of cooperation.

Mr. O'BRIEN (New Zealand): First, Sir, I wish to express congratulations to you and the other officers of the Committee on your election to your important positions. It is good to know that the First Committee is in such solid and capable hands.

We embark on our work in this Committee in the most auspicious climate that has ever existed for making progress on disarmament. The recent announcements by Presidents Bush and Gorbachev of significant reductions in

(Mr. O'Brien, New Zealand)

nuclear arsenals have to a large extent blown away the "mist of unreality" (A/46/1, p. 12), described by the Secretary-General in his annual report, as having hung over past disarmament negotiations. With the cold war now part of history, we are indeed opening the way to a safer and more secure world.

New Zealand applauds the vision that ushered in these measures. After years when progress was sometimes gradual, sometimes non-existent, the momentum that the nuclear disarmament process has now gathered is striking.

In the last three weeks the historic announcement by the United States and the positive response from the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics now present the prospect of the elimination of United States and Soviet land-based tactical nuclear weapons. New Zealand welcomes that move and looks forward to its early implementation. We also warmly welcome the decision of the United States, the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics and the United Kingdom to withdraw tactical nuclear weapons from surface ships, submarines and land-based naval aircraft. Following the significant reductions recently agreed in the Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty (START), we now also look forward to negotiations on further cuts to strategic nuclear arsenals, which we hope will produce an early and positive result.

In addition to their arms-control value, these latest developments have, we believe, an enormous political impact. We are moving from an age in which the major nuclear-weapon States participated in nuclear disarmament negotiations as competitors to a period in which trust and confidence allow unilateral and complementary disarmament measures, in some cases without any negotiations at all. This is nothing less than a revolution in the way in which nuclear disarmament is approached.

(Mr. O'Brien, New Zealand)

The multilateral disarmament process, which has for so long called for nuclear-arms reductions of this nature, will undoubtedly wish to show its support for the recent moves. We must remember, too, that the multilateral process, of which the First Committee is a key part, has a major role to play in reinforcing the security and stability fostered by these historic moves.

At a time of unprecedented nuclear-arms reductions, there is a need to strengthen measures to prevent the spread of nuclear weapons. As the Prime Minister of New Zealand confirmed to the General Assembly last month, strengthening the nuclear non-proliferation regime is a priority for New Zealand. Now that the opportunities for creating a more peaceful world are greater than ever before, we simply cannot tolerate the possibility that further nuclear-weapon States will emerge.

This issue has been highlighted by the exposure of Iraq's clandestine nuclear-weapons programme. New Zealand, through its association with the work of the United Nations Special Commission in Iraq, has been made well aware of the difficulties involved. We continue to support the Commission actively in its work.

That a party to the non-proliferation Treaty could embark on a nuclear-weapons programme raises important issues regarding the existing International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) safeguards regime. It is imperative that the safeguards regime be strengthened to allow greater scope for detection of such clandestine activities. This will necessarily mean a more intrusive inspection system and a commitment by States parties to the Treaty to use the mechanisms that are already provided for this purpose.

(Mr. O'Brien, New Zealand)

The Gulf war has shown the importance of safeguards on the supply of nuclear technology. New Zealand welcomes the decisions announced last month by the Governments of the United Kingdom and France to adopt full-scope safeguards as a condition of nuclear supply. We believe this should be the norm for all suppliers of nuclear technology.

In the Asia-Pacific region, safeguards issues have arisen in another form. The continued operation by a party to the non-proliferation Treaty, the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, of significant unsafeguarded nuclear facilities has raised serious issues. It is unacceptable for one party to use a bilateral dispute as an excuse for not honouring obligations it has undertaken in respect of all other parties to the non-proliferation Treaty. The longer this matter remains unresolved, the greater are anxieties about the nature of the nuclear programme involved. Clearly, the recent initiatives by the major nuclear-weapon States provide further impetus for the Democratic People's Republic of Korea to sign and implement a safeguards agreement, and we urge its Government to do so without further delay.

The challenges to the non-proliferation Treaty regime are clear, but so is its overriding contribution to peace and security. We must work together on all fronts to ensure that it is strengthened. This will involve further cooperative and complementary efforts, by both nuclear-weapon and non-nuclear-weapon parties to the Treaty. New Zealand for its part strongly supports the indefinite extension of the non-proliferation Treaty in 1995. We believe that the climate for achieving this result is now better in the light of recent positive developments.

(Mr. O'Brien, New Zealand)

The recent decisions by France, China, South Africa, Tanzania, Zambia, and Zimbabwe to become parties to the Non-Proliferation Treaty are most welcome. Their accession will bring the Treaty even closer to attracting universal adherence. In addition the progressive bilateral steps that Argentina and Brazil have taken to increase peaceful nuclear cooperation and enhance confidence are much to be commended. Nevertheless there remain a number of States outside the non-proliferation regime, several of whose nuclear programmes have been the subject of considerable international concern. These programmes strike a particularly discordant note at a time of increasing disarmament efforts. New Zealand therefore urges all States which have not yet done so to accede to the Treaty without delay.

The recent historic initiatives in the field of nuclear disarmament will also enhance confidence in the Non-Proliferation Treaty system. These measures will significantly advance the implementation of the nuclear disarmament obligations contained in article VI of the Treaty. We look forward to even greater progress in this area. In particular we hope that the new developments we are witnessing will result in a greater willingness to address nuclear-testing issues, progress on which remains a priority objective for New Zealand.

It has been New Zealand's long-standing view that the conclusion of a nuclear-test-ban treaty would inhibit both the vertical and horizontal proliferation of nuclear weapons. The need for a comprehensive test ban is even more immediate now that substantial reductions of nuclear arsenals are being pursued. Indeed with continued nuclear-weapons reductions New Zealand feels that it will become more difficult to present justification for any need for continued nuclear testing.

(Mr. O'Brien, New Zealand)

The time has come, we believe, for the international community to speak with one voice on this subject. That is why New Zealand is working once again to place before this Committee a single resolution calling for an end to nuclear testing. We believe that a text deserving of wide support from this Committee should be within our grasp.

The calls we make for a comprehensive test ban are accompanied by an acknowledgement that a solid technical foundation for the verification of such a treaty is essential to ensuring that it is complied with. For this reason New Zealand actively participates in the work of the Group of Scientific Experts which is testing an international seismic verification system. We would encourage other States that are committed to the goal of a comprehensive test ban to participate in that Group's work.

The experience that we and Australia have developed in the Group of Scientific Experts provided the basis for discussion papers on verification issues which New Zealand and Australia presented to the Partial Test Ban Treaty Amendment Conference and the Conference on Disarmament earlier this year. The key conclusion of these papers was that a comprehensive test-ban treaty could be verified by using existing technical means.

We consider that work on a comprehensive test ban needs to be advanced further in the Ad Hoc Committee on a Nuclear Test Ban of the Conference on Disarmament. It is vital that the Conference responds appropriately to the new positive climate by intensifying its work in this area. During the most recent session of the Conference, Sweden submitted a revised draft treaty proposal. It is our hope that such proposals will be looked at in greater detail during the next session.

(Mr. O'Brien, New Zealand)

New Zealand objects to nuclear testing wherever it occurs, but it remains of particular concern that France persists in testing nuclear weapons in our region. Such testing is directly contrary to the wishes of the South Pacific countries which negotiated and concluded the South Pacific Nuclear Free Zone Treaty. We are especially conscious of the fragility of our ocean environment and any potential threat is clearly a matter of concern within the region. The recent meeting of the region's paramount political body, the South Pacific Forum, expressed deep dismay at France's continued nuclear-testing programme and reiterated firm and unceasing opposition to nuclear testing in the region.

There can be no doubt how people in Europe would react to the prospect of having to endure a nuclear-testing programme at a time when dramatic nuclear disarmament measures are taking place. But continued French nuclear testing in the South Pacific means that the people of our region have had imposed upon them a practice which would be unacceptable in other regions, notably Europe. The New Zealand Prime Minister has consequently urged France to reconsider its programme in the light of the fundamental changes taking place elsewhere in the disarmament process.

The new world realities call for a fresh look at subjects on the disarmament agenda which appear to have been hostage to the cold war era. The issue of negative security assurances is one such subject in our view. Discussions in the Conference on Disarmament have made no breakthrough in the last 12 years. But the time has come to ask whether some of the obstacles to progress in this area cannot now be overcome. In the draft resolution on negative security assurances which we will consider during this session this Committee, under your able guidance, Sir, has an opportunity to look afresh at the issue.

(Mr. O'Brien, New Zealand)

Like other countries which have spoken before me in this debate, New Zealand's disarmament concerns extend beyond nuclear weapons alone. The urgent need to conclude an effective chemical weapons convention has been underlined by the Gulf war. With the negotiations in Geneva now entering a critical stage all efforts must be applied to attain this objective by the 1992 deadline set by the Conference on Disarmament. New Zealand will support efforts to generate the political impetus that will be necessary to guarantee a successful outcome.

Support for the biological weapons Convention is also important for international peace and security. New Zealand was pleased to see progress made at the recent Review Conference on ways to strengthen the Convention. We welcome in particular the agreement by States Parties to establish a group to examine potential verification measures and the improvement of confidence-building.

In the aftermath of the Gulf war there is greater recognition of the need to adopt effective measures to address not only weapons of mass destruction but also massive build-ups of conventional armaments. As the New Zealand Minister for Disarmament and Arms Control said at the Conference on Disarmament earlier this year, it is conventional weapons that have caused so much death and destruction in the wars of the world and that also consume the bulk of the world's excessive military expenditure.

This Committee has already recognized the role disarmament and confidence-building measures can play in the field of conventional armaments. While the measures may need to take account of particular regional circumstances, States from all regions should exercise a common determination

(Mr. O'Brien, New Zealand)

in seeking to address issues of peace and security in a regional context where appropriate.

There has already been useful progress in some other areas of the world besides Europe. We hope these positive trends will continue, with the United Nations playing an appropriate role. In particular New Zealand considers that the work on regional disarmament that has been initiated in the Disarmament Commission should result in general principles relevant to all States, and we look forward to tangible progress being made in this regard at next year's session of the Commission.

Openness too is an important means of improving trust and confidence, and therefore stability. In this respect New Zealand welcomes the report of the Group of Experts on the Study on Ways and Means of Promoting Transparency in International Transfers of Conventional Arms (A/46/301). We consider that the recommendations set out in the report provide a viable basis for further action by this Committee. In particular we believe that a United Nations register of conventional arms transfers should be established as soon as possible. We will support efforts to achieve results in this area during this session.

New Zealand believes that an arms control register is part of a wider process of improving the level of openness in the disarmament field. The scope of this register could be widened in future to include information on such matters as weapons holdings and indigenous arms production.

(Mr. O'Brien, New Zealand)

So far as arms transfers are concerned, transparency must be accompanied by efforts on the part of arms exporters and importers to exercise responsibility and restraint. Moves by some major arms exporters to cooperate in their efforts are welcome, and we hope that these can be widened. But it is important for all countries to have in place mechanisms to prevent exports which are illegal or which would contribute to unwarranted arms build-ups.

At the beginning of my statement I mentioned the reference in the Secretary-General's report to the "mist of unreality" in which disarmament discussions have been shrouded. We can contribute to lifting the mist here in the First Committee by examining our own work practices. For example, we need to adopt a more realistic approach to the content of our agenda. There are clearly some issues on the agenda which, after several years, have been overtaken by events and which are no longer relevant to the actual situation in today's world. As was noted in the statement made on Monday on behalf of the States members of the European Community, some issues might be raised every two years, or less frequently, as part of the process of rationalization.

Disarmament has, in the space of a few years, emerged as a key tool in efforts to build a more peaceful and more secure world. The opportunities to make progress on the range of disarmament issues before us have never been better. To ignore these opportunities, or to fritter them away in unproductive efforts, would represent a betrayal of the hopes of the international community. New Zealand thinks that it is therefore our duty to take advantage of the opportunities and to engage in constructive dialogue aimed at achieving practical outcomes.

(Mr. O'Brien, New Zealand)

This session must be a positive and productive one for the First Committee, and we are sure that under your able guidance, Mr. Chairman, it will be.

The meeting rose at 12.05 p.m.